

## Wild, Exotic, and Wild-Domestic Hybrid Animals as Pets

**Position:** The Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) does not support the importing, selling, trafficking, breeding and keeping of exotic animals, wild animals and their hybrids as pets.

### Definitions:

Domesticated Animal: Animals who have been selectively bred over many generations to live in close association with humans. These animals have been bred for characteristics that allow for human handling and contact, are genetically distinct from wild animals and do not occupy an ecological niche in the wild.

Hybrid Animal: An animal produced by crossing a domesticated animal with a non-domesticated animal. Hybrid animals include, but are not limited to, wolf-dog hybrids and domestic felines crossed with non-domesticated felines.

Exotic Animal: A wild, non-domesticated and non-indigenous animal to an area. Exotic animals may be born in the wild or born in captivity.

Wild Animal: A non-domesticated animal, which is indigenous to an area, and which may be born in the wild or born in captivity. These animals have not been subject to many generations of selective and controlled breeding and are therefore not adapted to living in close association with humans.

### Summary

- Wild animals and their hybrids have not undergone domestication and are not suited for living in close association with humans.
- The complex environmental, physiological, nutritional, social and behavioural needs of wild and hybrid animals cannot be fully met in captivity.
- The keeping of wild and hybrid animals as pets may pose unnecessary risks to the animals' welfare, humans, other animals, the ecosystem and can support unethical practices.

### Rationale

- While EHS does not support breeding or keeping wild, exotic and hybrid animals as pets, EHS acknowledges these animals are kept as pets.
- EHS believes existing wild, exotic and hybrid animals kept as pets should have, at minimum, the ability to experience the Five Freedoms. Guardians of these animals must provide species-specific care and strive to meet the Five Freedoms by providing for their physical, behavioural, social and environmental needs, and seek veterinary guidance from veterinarians with knowledge of the species to ensure they have good welfare.

- While EHS does not support keeping and breeding wild and hybrid animals as pets, EHS will provide the necessary care and appropriate placement to these animals should they arrive to EHS.
- While wild and hybrid animals share some characteristics with domesticated animals and may appear to be tame, they remain undomesticated and retain traits from their wild ancestors, even if captive-bred. Animals become domesticated only after many generations, due to hundreds or thousands of years of selective breeding for characteristics that allow for living in close association with humans.
- A wild animal's needs cannot be fully met in captivity, and their natural behaviours, anatomy and physiology can present inherent dangers and challenges to guardians, veterinarians and other animal care workers.
- Wild and exotic animals, including those born in captivity, retain their hunting and territorial defense mechanisms which can result in harm or fatality to people and animals, such as:
  - Producing venom and poison;
  - The ability to bite and constrict; and
  - Utilizing their claws, teeth, beaks and talons.
- EHS does not support non-therapeutic procedures, such as declawing or tooth removal, aimed at eliminating dangers in an attempt to increase an animal's suitability as a pet.
- Wild animals can retain behaviours which are difficult for guardians to manage or successfully modify, such as:
  - Unpredictable aggression;
  - Marking, spraying and other undesirable urination patterns;
  - Predation;
  - Wandering, straying and escaping; and
  - Digging and scratching.
- The welfare of wild and hybrid animals can be compromised when kept as pets due to a lack of:
  - Understanding of environmental, nutritional, social and behavioural needs;
  - Access to appropriate or specialist veterinary care;
  - Adequate housing; and
  - Availability and existence of information regarding species-specific care.
- The sourcing and breeding of wild and hybrid animals can contribute to the illegal capture and trade of wildlife, both domestically and internationally, and often disregards animal health and welfare. The extensive capture of these animals may result in the extinction of endangered species.
- The conditions of acquiring and transporting non-domesticated animals is often substandard, can compromise the animal's welfare and can result in death during transport.
- Vaccines used for domestic animals may be used in hybrids; however, commercial vaccines approved for use in domestic animals have not been sufficiently studied to demonstrate safety and efficacy in hybrid animals.
  - Legislation around hybrid animals varies. Due to the uncertainty about the effectiveness of rabies vaccines in hybrid animals, they may be at risk of mandatory euthanasia if they bite a human.
- Wild and hybrid animals may be affected by legislation prohibiting them from being kept as pets, and few environments are suited to keeping these animals and maintaining adequate welfare. This combination leads to few suitable environments for

them should they require rehoming and can lead to an abundance of wild or hybrid animals in sanctuary settings, which are limited in number and capacity.

- Wild and hybrid animals may become unwanted pets in a short period of time, due to lack of guardian knowledge on care requirements and the animal's natural behaviours.
- Few facilities are capable of adequately caring for unwanted wild and hybrid animals, thus limiting rehoming options.
  - Sanctuaries are few in number and often have limited resources or capacity;
  - Responsible and accredited zoos are unlikely to accept pets;
  - Release or abandonment of animals is illegal and may pose ecological and zoonotic risks or danger to other animals and people; and
  - Euthanasia may be the only humane outcome for wild and hybrid animals who cannot be rehomed.

## References

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